

AT A GLANCE



AFP, Paris

Factfiles on the eight teams taking part in the 2003 Confederations Cup which starts on Wednesday:

GROUP A

FRANCE
Coach: Jacques Santini
Captain: Marcel Desailly
Form:
World Cup winners - 1998
European Championship winners - 1984, 2000
Confederations Cup winners - 2001

Olympic Games - gold medallists 1984
FIFA ranking - 2nd

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Fabien Barthez (Manchester United/ENG), Gregory Coupet (Lyon), Mickael Landreau (Nantes)

Defenders: William Gallas (Chelsea/ENG), Marcel Desailly (Chelsea/ENG), Bixente Lizarazu (Bayern Munich/GER), Philippe Mexes (Auxerre), Willy Sagnol (Bayern Munich/GER), Mikael Silvestre (Manchester United/ENG), Lilian Thuram (Juventus Turin/ITA), Jean-Alain Boumsong (Auxerre)

Midfielders: Benoit Pedretti (Schaux), Robert Pires (Arsenal/ENG), Jerome Rothen (Monaco), Olivier Dacourt (AS Rome/ITA), Olivier Kapo (Auxerre), Ludovic Giuly (Monaco), Sylvain Wiltord (Arsenal/ENG), Ousmane Dabo (Atalanta Bergamo/ITA)

Strikers: Djibril Cisse (Auxerre), Sidney Govou (Lyon), Thierry Henry (Arsenal/ENG), Steve Marlet (Fulham/ENG)

JAPAN
Coach: Zico
Captain: Hidetoshi Nakata
Form:
World Cup - two appearances in 1998 and 2002 when they reached the second round

Asian Cup: winners in 1992 and 2000
Confederations Cup: 2001

FIFA ranking: 23rd

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Yoshikatsu Kawaguchi (Portsmouth/ENG), Seigo Narazaki (Nagoya Grampus Eight), Hitoshi Sogahata (Kashima Antlers)

Defenders: Yutaka Akita (Kashima), Akira Narahashi (Kashima), Toshihiro Hattori (Jubilo Iwata), Nobuhisa Yamada (Urawa Red Diamonds), Ryuzo Morioka (Shimizu S-Pulse), Tsuneyasu Miyamoto (Gamba Osaka), Keisuke Tsuboi (Urawa)

Midfielders: Daisuke Oku (Yokohama Marinos), Takashi Fukunishi (Iwata), Hidetoshi Nakata (Parma/ITA), Alessandro Santos (Shimizu), Shunsuke Nakamura (Reggina/ITA), Mitsu Ogashawa (Kashima), Koji Nakata (Kashima), Junichi Inamoto (Fulham/ENG), Yasuhiro Endo (Osaka)

Forwards: Masashi Nakayama (Iwata), Takayuki Suzuki (Genk/BEL), Yuichiro Nagai (Urawa), Naohiro Takahara (Hamburg/GER)

COLOMBIA
Coach: Francisco Maturana
Captain: Ivan Cordoba
Form:
World Cup - four appearances, best result in 1990 when they made it into the second round

Copa America - winners in 2001

FIFA ranking: 39th

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Oscar Cordoba (Besiktas/TUR), Juan Carlos Henao (Once Caldas), Luis Martinez (Envigado)

Defenders: Ivan Cordoba (Inter Milan/ITA), Mario Yepes (Nantes/FRA), Gerardo Bedoya (Racing Club/ARG), Gonzalo Martinez (Naples/ITA), Edgar Ramos (Santa Fe), Jose Mera (Deportivo Cali), Gerardo Vallejo (Deportivo Cali), Andres Mosquera (Deportivo Cali)

Midfielders: Jorge Lopez (Millonarios), Arnulfo Valentina (Once Caldas), Ruben Velasquez (Once Caldas), Oscar Diaz (Deportivo Cali), Giovanni Hernandez (Deportivo Cali), Elkin Murillo (Deportivo Cali), Jairo Patino (Deportivo Cali)

Strikers: Victor Aristizabal (Cruzeiro/BRA), Eudaldo Arriaga

(Junior), Martin Arzuaga (Junior), Herly Alcazar (Centauros), Elson Becerra (Tolima)

NEW ZEALAND

Coach: Mick Waite
Captain: Chris Zorich
Form:
World Cup - one appearance in 1982, beaten in first round
Oceania Cup - winners in 1998 and 2002
FIFA ranking: 51st

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Jason Batty (Caversham), Mike Utting (Kingz), Mark Paston (Napier City Rovers)

Defenders: Duncan Oughton (Columbus Crew), Mike Mulligan (Barnsley/NZL), Chris Zorich (Newcastle United/AUS), Danny Hay (Walsall/ENG), Gavin Wilkinson (Portland Timbers), Ryan Nelsen (Washington DC Utd/USA), Scott Smith (Kingstonian), Gerard Davis (Tamper Utd), Noah Hickey (Tamper Utd)

Midfielders: Ivan Vicelich (Roda JC/NED), Aaron Lines (Ruch Chorzow), Mark Burton (Kingz), Chris Jackson (Kingz), Raf De Gregorio (Kingz), Simon Elliott (Los Angeles Galaxy/AUS), Michael Wilson (Stanford University/USA)

Strikers: Chris Killen (Oldham Athletic/ENG), Chris Bouckenooghe (Ronse), Shane Smeltz (Adelaide City Force/AUS), Vaughan Coveney (South Melbourne/AUS)

GROUP B

BRAZIL
Coach: Carlos Alberto Parreira
Captain: Emerson

Form:
World Cup winners - 1958, 1962, 1970, 1994, 2002
Copa America winners - 1919, 1922, 1949, 1989, 1997, 1999
Confederations Cup winners - 1997
FIFA ranking: 1st

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Dida (AC Milan/ITA), Fabio (Vasco da Gama), Julio Cesar (Flamengo)

Defenders: Belelli (Villarreal/SPA), Fabio Aurelio (Valencia/SPA), Juan (Bayer Leverkusen/GER), Lucio (Bayer Leverkusen/GER), Fabio Luciano (Corinthians), Ed Dracena (Cruzeiro), Maurinho (Cruzeiro), Kleber (Corinthians)

Midfielders: Eduardo Costa (Bordeaux/FRA), Emerson (Parma/ITA), Gil (Corinthians), Luiz Fabiano (Sao Paulo), Ilan (Atletico Paranaense)

Strikers: Ronaldinho (Paris Saint Germain/FRA), Adriano (Parma/ITA), Gil (Corinthians), Luiz Fabiano (Sao Paulo), Ilan (Atletico Paranaense)

TURKEY
Coach: Senol Gunes
Captain: Rustu (probable)

Form:
World Cup - two appearances, best result third in 2002
European Championships - quarter-finalists in 2000
FIFA ranking: 8th

SQUAD
Keepers: Rustu Recber (Fenerbahce), Omer Catik (Gaziantepspor), Murat Sahin (Adanaspor)

Defenders: Fatih Sonkaya (Roda Kerkrade/NED), Bulent Korkmaz (Galatasaray), Fatih Akyel (Fenerbahce), Alpay Ozalan (Aston Villa/ENG), Ahmet Yildirim (Besiktas), Deniz Baris (Genclerbirligi), Ibrahim Uzulmez (Besiktas), Servet Cetin (Denizlispor)

Midfielders: Ergun Penbe (Galatasaray), Tayfun Korkut (Real Sociedad/SPA), Volkan Arslan (Galatasaray), Yildiray Basturk (Bayer Leverkusen/GER), Selcuk Sahin (Istanbulspor), Ibrahim Toraman (Gaziantepspor), Gokdeniz Karadeniz (Trabzonspor)

Strikers: Tuncay Sanli (Fenerbahce), Nihat Kahveci (Real Sociedad/SPA), Okan Yilmaz (Bursaspor), Huseyin Kartal (Ankaragucu), Necati Ates (Adanaspor)

UNITED STATES
Coach: Bruce Arena
Captain: yet to be named

Form:
World Cup - seven appearances, best result semi-finalists in 1930 and quarter-finalists in 2002
Confederations Cup - third in 1992 and 1999

CONCACAF Cup - winners in 1991 and 2002
FIFA ranking: 10th

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Joe Cannon (Lens/FRA), Marcus Hahnemann (Reading/ENG), Tim Howard (New Jersey)

Defenders: Greg Vanney (Bastia/FRA), Gregg Berhalter (Cottbus/GER), Carlos Bocanegra (Chicago), Dan Califf (Los Angeles), Steve Cherundolo (Hannover/GER), Eddie Pope (New Jersey), Pablo Mastroeni (Colorado)

Midfielders: Chris Armas (Chicago), Bobby Convey (DC United), Chris Klein (Kansas City), Eddie Lewis (Preston/ENG), Kyle Martino (Columbus), Frankie Hejduk (Columbus)

Strikers: DaMarcus Beasley (Chicago), Jeff Cunningham (Columbus), Landon Donovan (San Jose), Jovan Kirovski (Birmingham/ENG), Earnie Stewart (D.C United), Clint Mathis (New Jersey), Taylor Twellman (New England)

CAMEROON

Coach: Winfried Schaefer
Captain: Rigobert Song

Form:

World Cup - five appearances, best result quarter-finalists in 1990
African Nations Cup - winners in 1984, 1988, 2000 and 2002
Olympic Games - gold medallists in 2000
FIFA ranking: 18th



PHOTO: AFP

TIME FOR SOME SHOPPING! Brazil coach Carlos Alberto Parreira looks for electronic devices at a store in the Champs Elysee avenue in Paris on June 15.

Hosts' point to prove



AFP, Paris

The 2003 Confederations Cup represents the first real test for hosts France to prove to the world that they have recovered from their pitiful showing at last year's World Cup.

A first round exit in Asia without a single goal scored was nothing short of a humiliating disaster for the 1998 champions, resulting in a considered clear out of the old guard by new coach Jacques Santini on the return home.

Under Santini's guidance France has put together a string of decent results in their qualifying group for Euro 2004 yet admittedly against low key opponents.

Coming up against the likes of World Cup winners Brazil, Turkey and the United States will be a different ball game altogether, a task made even more difficult without their midfield general Zinedine Zidane.

Arsenal midfielder Robert Pires, speaking from France's base camp at Clairefontaine, stressed: "We've got a title to defend - the image of France is at stake."

Pires, missing from the World Cup debacle with a knee injury, added: "This isn't really a dress

rehearsal for the European Championship, but it will give us a chance to get to know each other well and cement as a group."

Santini for his part reflected:

"With 'Zizou' (Zidane) missing it'll give others the chance of a game - it's up to them to seize the opportunity."

"This Cup is being held between two stages of qualification (for Euro 2004), but it's an important objective for 'Les Bleus,'" added the former Lyon coach.

"Because of the overloaded fixture list there are no more tournaments - as a result it's going to be useful for us."

France, who beat South Korea in the 2001 final, are drawn in Group A against Japan, Colombia their first opponents and outsiders New Zealand.

Group B is headed by a Brazil squad virtually unrecognisable from the one that triumphed over Germany in the World Cup last year.

Coach Carlos Alberto Parreira has called up seven new caps as he makes do without World Footballer of the Year Ronaldinho, who like teammate Roberto Carlos is being held on to by his club Real Madrid.

AC Milan midfielder Rivaldo is also an absentee but one major force he can rely on is Ronaldinho who will surely be as busy off the pitch as on as the Paris Saint Germain striker seeks to find a new home for next season.

But the sought-after star refuses to be distracted by all the transfer speculation.

He said: "I'm not thinking about an eventual transfer, I'm here to help my team."

"The 2001 Confederations Cup (in which Brazil finished only fourth) wasn't a great memory."

Parreira added: "We are world champions, everyone expects Brazil to win, but we've got a new team with seven new caps."

Parreira said he was looking forward to their first game against Cameroon on Thursday.

"The first match of a competition is always widely anticipated. It's like giving birth. You never know whether the baby will be beautiful or not. The first game is the same, you don't know if you're going to give birth to a decent team or not."

As well as Cameroon Brazil have as company in Group B Turkey, whom they beat in the World Cup semi-finals, and the United States, one of the surprise packages in Asia making it through to the quarter-finals.

US coach Bruce Arena believes his team's World Cup showing has left an important legacy.

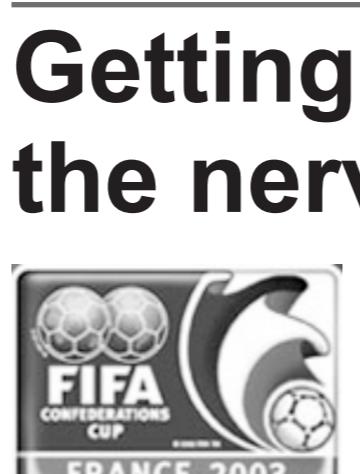
"For sure we've grown in confidence, we've got a more positive approach," he said.

Japan's Brazilian coach Zico, who took over from Philippe Troussier last July, has seen four recent friendlies called off because of either SARS or the war in Iraq.

The Brazilian legend's problems were compounded with the defection through injury of Feyenoord midfielder Shing Ono and Masashi Nakayama but he is hoping his new secret weapon will cause trouble - Brazilian-born star Alex Santos who plays at left wing-back.

Zico's record since taking over reads one win against South Korea, two defeats and two draws.

For Cameroon, the event, which is being staged at the Stade de France in Paris, Lyon and St Etienne delivers up a chance to shrug off a poor World Cup campaign while New Zealand will be hoping to improve on their last appearance in the competition in 1999 when they lost all their three matches.



AFP, Paris

The Confederations Cup is hopefully a thick-skinned individual for if not it is likely to be feeling a little sore after all the insults hurled at it over the past year.

France's World Cup winning captain Didier Deschamps has attacked the competition which starts in France on Wednesday as an "aberration" on an already creaking fixture list.

Europe's key clubs have all dismissed it as "superfluous".

Deschamps' main gripe is that the Confederations Cup places an unnecessary extra burden on players' fitness.

The Monaco coach said: "This Confederations Cup is an aberration. It's an event which attacks the physical integrity of players, they won't have time to recover."

"We (the French league) start on August 2, France get together on June 11, and we finish the season on May 24: that doesn't leave a lot of time to recuperate."

Deschamps' comments mirror the opinion from the G14 group of Europe's top teams.

G14 director general Thomas Kurth explained: "We're opposed to this competition. We've tried to be conciliatory, constructive, to find a solution. Otherwise we'll have to scale down competitions across the board."

He added: "Clubs are lending their players, but they don't get anything in return."

"Do the sums yourself - a major player costs his club between 4,000 and 5,000 euros a day."

Even France coach Jacques Santini is on the act, urging FIFA last year to come up with new dates to better fit in with the congested European fixture list.